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The Republican Platform

Boastful,
But Neither Truthful
Nor Courageous

Some one has described the republican party as like the potato vine—"the best part of it being under ground." The platform adopted last week at Chicago by the republican national convention seems to justify this description. It is devoted to reminiscence and glows with funereal phrases. The eulogy pronounced in the platform would seem immodest if it described the work of those present in the convention and, as the republican leaders are nothing if not modest, their language must be construed as referring to the dead or the absent. The pledges for the future are so meager, as compared with the praise of past achievements, that the party's attitude resembles the attitude of a prisoner at the bar who refuses to testify and relies for acquittal upon the testimony of friends as to former good character.

The most emphatic part of the platform, so far as it deals with pending issues, is that devoted to the tariff question and the language on this subject seems intended as a rebuke to the tariff revisionists in the republican party.

Republican leaders seem to go on the theory that their platforms supply the only authentic history of the country and that instead of being under obligation to recite facts they can by their simple statement create facts. Witness the gross misrepresentation contained in one sentence. The platform says: "A democratic tariff has always been followed by business adversity; a republican tariff by business prosperity." Now what are the facts? The democratic tariff of 1846 was followed by an era of prosperity so widespread that when the republican party wrote its first national platform in 1856 the platform did not mention a protective tariff. Here, then, is an historical fact which shows that adversity does not always follow a democratic tariff. How about the panics of 1873 and 1893? Did they follow democratic tariffs? When the panic of 1873 occurred the republican party was in power in all the branches of the federal government and the country was in the undisturbed possession of a republican high tariff law.

Not only that, but the panic came just after the overwhelming republican victory of 1872 that put the party in position to make the tariff still higher if that was deemed necessary. Did the republican leaders forget the panic of 1873, or were they simply indifferent to the truth?

Here, then, is an historical fact which proves conclusively that prosperity does not always follow a republican tariff. But what of the panic of 1893? It came while the McKinley tariff was still in force—a year before the Wilson law went into effect. They may reply that the panic was caused by the threat of the repeal of the McKinley law involved in the election of Mr. Cleveland, but there is no force in that argument, for if the people were pleased with the McKinley law why did the democrats win a sweeping victory in 1890 and two years later defeat by nearly 400,000 votes the republican candidate who as president signed the McKinley bill?

The republican platform claims too much. It boastfully asserts that the republican party

has controlled the government during nearly all of the forty-four years since 1860. It declares that the democrats had undisputed control during but two years of the forty-four (and it might have added that the so-called democrat who occupied the White house during those two years helped to elect a republican successor). Why, then, does it try to escape responsibility for the two disastrous panics which have occurred since 1860?

The platform says: "When the only free trade country among the great nations agitates a return to protection the chief protection country should not falter in maintaining it." If the writers of that platform had been entirely frank they would have said that the policy of protection in the United States has raised tariff barriers against this country in most of the countries of Europe and that retaliation against the United States is the main argument of those who advocate protection in England. So much for the tariff plank of the platform.

In discussing the trust question also the platform appeals to memory rather than inspires hope. It claims credit for republican anti-trust laws "which the democratic party failed to enforce" and declares that they have been "fearlessly enforced by a republican president." Here again Mr. Cleveland is charged up to the democratic party. The odious record of his plutocratic administration still hangs like a millstone about the democratic party's neck. It is base ingratitude on the part of the republican leaders to seize the White house through Mr. Cleveland's treachery to his party and then use his administration as a horrible example. Only by contrast can President Roosevelt's administration seem to be fearlessly anti-trust. Shown against a black background of Clevelandism almost any color looks bright, but standing alone and judged on its merits the Roosevelt administration is anything but an anti-monopoly administration. The existence of a multitude of trusts is well known; the extortion practiced by those trusts is enormous and everywhere apparent. What is the president doing to destroy them? His friends point to the decision in the merger case, but it has not been followed up by the enforcement of the principle established by it, and the temporary chairman of the convention is one of the most conspicuous corporation attorneys in the country. The platform not only fails to promise any specific remedy, not only declares the party content with the little done by the administration, but complacently classes the trusts with the labor organizations. It says: "Combinations of capital and of labor are the result of the economic movement of the age." This is a defense of the trusts—not a condemnation. Then the platform adds: "But neither must be permitted to infringe upon the rights and interests of the people." Here again the laboring man is used as a companion piece for the trust. "Such combinations," continues the platform, "when lawfully formed for lawful purposes are alike entitled to the protection of the laws, but both are subject to the laws, and neither can be permitted to break them." As the

trusts are now breaking the laws with impunity, this must be intended as a warning to laboring men only. The trusts are holding the laboring man between themselves and the fire of public opinion. As a declaration against trusts the platform is a hollow mockery—one must be anxious to deceive himself if he accepts the republican platform as offering any hope of relief from trust exactions. There are no words of encouragement for the laboring man. He is promised punishment if he violates the law, but he is offered no relief from government by injunction. He is assured that the Dingley tariff has given him more employment and higher wages, but nothing is said about an eight-hour day.

The platform pledges the party to "the peaceful settlement of international differences by arbitration," but nothing is said about arbitration between American corporations and their employees. Why is the laboring man thus ignored? The answer is easy: It is because the republican party as now organized is a party of the corporations and it acts for the corporations.

In enumerating the deeds which they regard as meritorious the writers of the platform call attention to tariff legislation, the establishment of the gold standard, the reduction of taxes after the Spanish war, the restoration of public credit, the freeing of Cuba, the suppressing of insurrection in the Philippines, the preservation of the integrity of China, the securing of a canal route, the encouragement of irrigation, the reorganization of the army, the improvement of the militia, and the increase in the navy, but there is in all the enumeration no act which is declared to be in the interest of labor, although without the labor vote the party would not have a majority in a half dozen states. Even in pointing with pride to President Roosevelt's action in settling the coal strike they did not dare to indorse arbitration as a permanent method for settling disputes between capital and labor.

On the great question of imperialism the republican party announces no policy and gives no pledge. It refers to the subject and declares that the republican party has established order in the Philippines, given security to life and property and "conferred upon the people of those islands the largest civil liberty they have ever enjoyed." What a proud boast! They were subjects of a king and were ruled by arbitrary authority and they are better off under our rule than under Spanish rule! Is this all they are to hope for? Then, too, "civil liberty" has been "conferred" upon them! What a departure from the doctrines of Jefferson and Lincoln! Instead of being a great republic holding before the world the light of self-government we have shrunk to the stature of a benevolent despot doling out liberty in broken doses to "inferior races," assuring them meanwhile that our medicine is more pleasant to take than the medicine which they formerly received at the hands of kings!

The platform contains a plank threatening reprisals on the south if black suffrage is interfered with, but contains not a word about the